



Fact Sheet- “SMP Program”

Program Established: May 1997

Primary Funding Source: The US Administration on Aging (AoA)

Goal: HHS, particularly the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of Inspector General (OIG), has placed significant emphasis on the identification and reduction of billions of dollars of fraud and errors in the Medicare and Medicaid programs. AoA works in partnership with CMS, OIG, the Department of Justice, Attorney General’s office, and other Federal, State, and local partners to assist in this effort by capitalizing on the role that senior volunteers and beneficiaries can play in the fight against fraud.

SMP Program Overview: The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program consists of sixty- four innovative community-based projects located in virtually every state, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico. The SMP projects utilize the skills and expertise of retired professionals, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, accountants, and others to work in their communities, educating and empowering beneficiaries to take an active role in the detection and prevention of health care fraud and abuse, with a focus on the Medicare and Medicaid programs. SMP staff and trained volunteers:

- partner with aging services network professionals, law enforcement, and others to promote community awareness of health care errors, fraud and abuse;
- develop and disseminate consumer education materials about Medicare, Medicaid and fraud, errors and abuse through presentations, health fairs, and press events;
- provide consumer counseling, and when necessary serve as consumer advocates to resolve billing disputes/ issues;
- make appropriate referral to health care agencies and law enforcement for suspected cases of errors, fraud or abuse; and
- support technical assistance efforts designed to share and replicate common strategies and successful practices among federal, state and local officials, health care professionals, community service providers who serve older Americans, and beneficiaries and their families.

Making A Difference: The SMP staff and volunteers have documented a successful track record – amassing a virtual army of more than 48,000 trained volunteers and counselors. Since 1997, the program has reached out to nearly 2 million seniors through group training sessions, health fairs and one-on-one counseling. The SMP program has played a role in the recovery or savings of more than \$104 million dollars. More importantly however, consumers are receiving much needed information and support to be their own advocate and protect themselves and the system. While it is impossible to accurately calculate the savings attributable to the prevention of errors, fraud and abuse, we do know that in just six months in 2004 the SMPs documented and investigated more than 6,000 consumer complaints and inquiries.

To Learn More or Become Involved: Successful community partnerships and local volunteer support are the keys to the success of the SMP program. If you are interested in volunteering, or an organization that wants to talk with your local SMP about partnership opportunities, visit www.smpresource.org and click on the “SMP Locator” button on the home page.